

ISSUE FEATURES

SAR SCENE

The Canadian Search and Rescue Magazine Online

Fall/Winter 2004 Vol. 14, #3

**SARVAC names
new President**

**Disabled
vessels: the
SAR Role**

SAREX 2004

**Discarded
beacon sends
out alert signal**

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e-mail alerts to
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**Mingan kayaker saved
thanks to prevention
project**

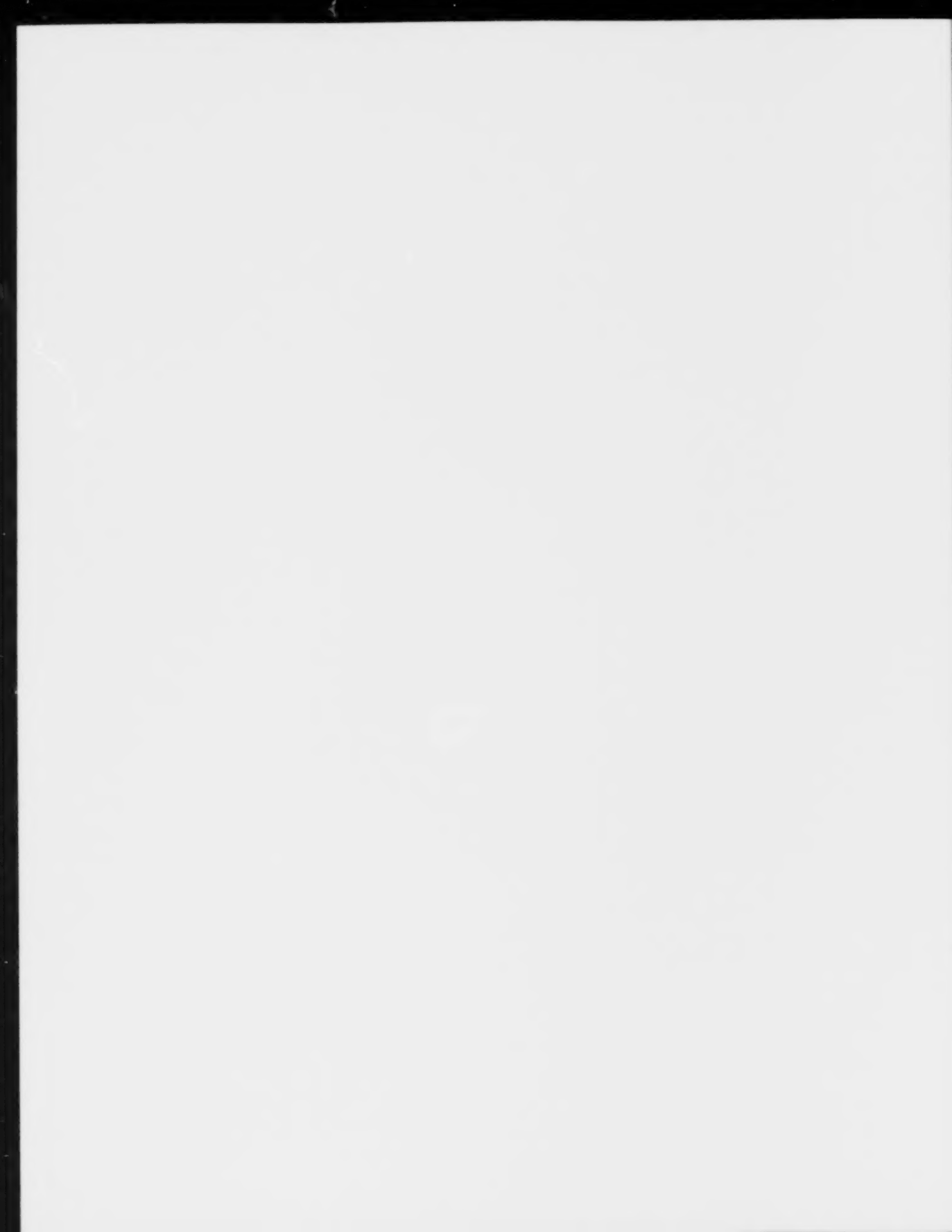


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SARSCENE_{online}

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Facts and opinions in SARSCENE are
those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the
position or policies of the Secretariat.

Editor: Lori MacKay
E-mail: lmackay@nss.gc.ca

Communications Director: Elizabeth Katz
E-mail: ekatz@nss.gc.ca

National Search and Rescue Secretariat
275 Slater Street, 4th floor
Ottawa ON K1A 0K2

Phone: 1-800-727-9414
Fax: (613) 996-3746
Web site: www.nss.gc.ca

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Submissions are welcome and should be sent to the Editor.

Doppler radar project complete

The \$34.9 million Environment Canada project that began in 1997 is now complete, as the last of its Doppler radar facilities became operational this past September.

Located in Kapuskasing, Ont., this last station is one of 31 radar stations in the Canadian Doppler network that help to forecast severe weather events across Canada.

"The Doppler Radar network's completion is an important step in the modernization of weather forecasting," said the Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of the Environment.

"More than 98 per cent of the Canadian population will receive more accurate and timely weather warnings, enabling them to take action to ensure their health, safety and security."

For more information about the Doppler radar project, visit www.msc-smc.ec.gc.ca/projects/nrp/index_e.cfm.

New Canadian magazine for the SAR community

by John Birkby

Andrew John Publishing Inc., publisher of Wavelength magazine and Emergency Management Canada, announces the launch of Canadian Search and Rescue Magazine (CSARM) in February 2005. With a mandate to provide information and articles related to land, sea, and air SAR, CSARM will be the common denominator for both professional and volunteer SAR personnel.

Offering a forum for SAR groups to communicate with each other, CSARM welcomes editorial submissions. With a projected circulation of more than 5,000 copies, CSARM will provide suppliers of goods and services related to SAR with an excellent marketing vehicle, while providing critically important information to SAR personnel.

For more information, contact Mr. John Birkby, Group Publisher, at 905-628-4309 or jbirkby@andrewjohnpublishing.com.

New Canadian Coast Guard SAR facilities open in B.C.

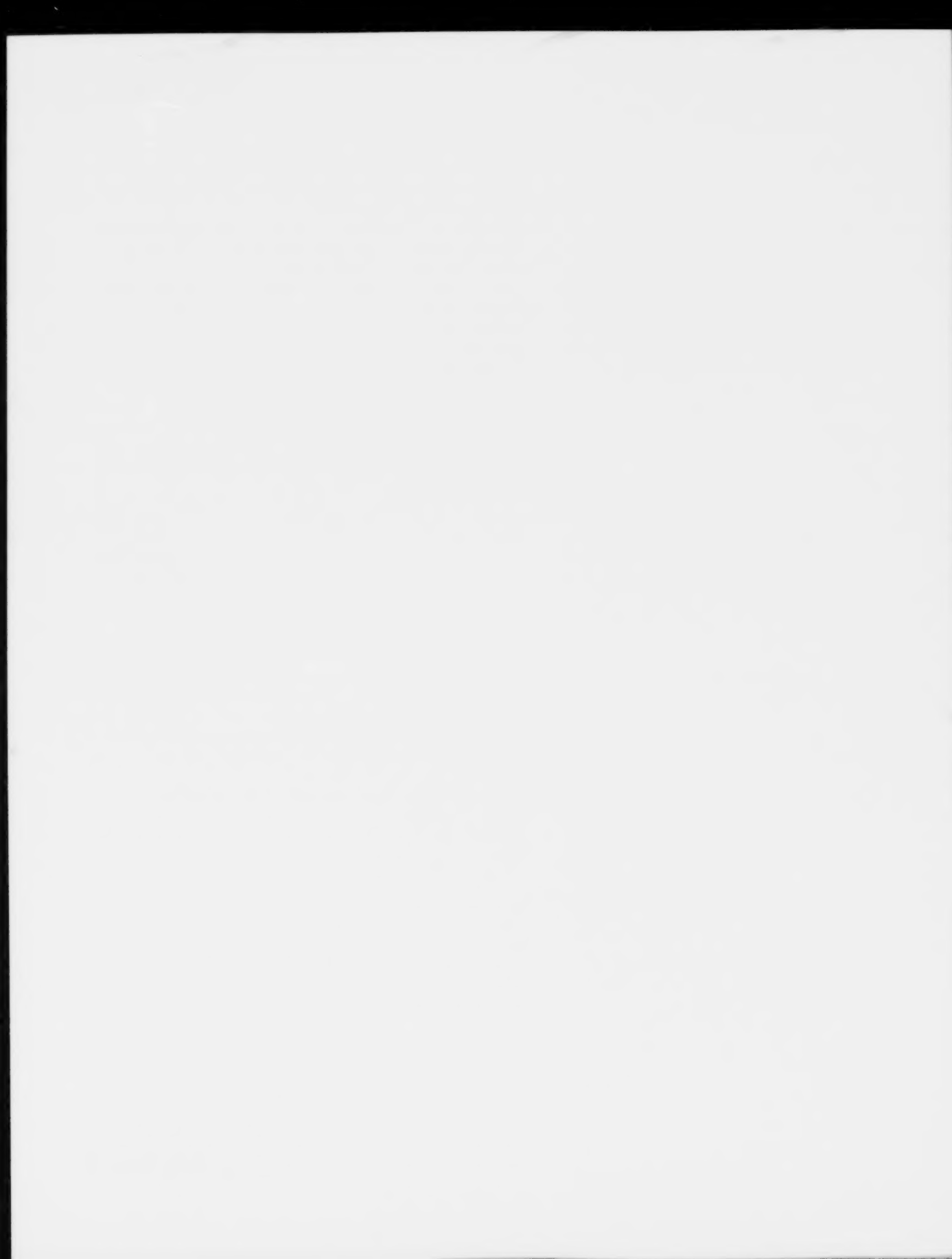
Two new Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) search and rescue (SAR) facilities have opened in B.C. this past year and their first few months have been busy.

The new facilities, one at Bella Bella and the other at Sandspit, have been operational since June, but were opened with an official ceremony this past September. Bella Bella is located north west of Vancouver, while Sandspit is on the east coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands.

In addition to the new facilities, each has been assigned a new 47-foot multi-task high endurance lifeboat.

In 2001, the Canadian government announced CCG would establish a new station to provide search





and rescue, and other Coast Guard services, in the community of Bella Bella as part of the SAR Integrity program.

CCGC Cape Farewell is located at the Bella Bella facility, while CCGC Cape Mudge is at Sandspit.

Between June and the end of September, the Bella Bella station responded to 24 search and rescue incidents, while Sandspit responded to 32 incidents.

John Adams, Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard, said "the positioning of the station and assignment of the cutter Cape Farewell to the Bella Bella area has greatly improved our search and rescue capability in B.C.'s Central Coast area."

Proposed common frequency for SAR radio communications

A recent proposal tabled with Industry Canada seeks to improve search and rescue (SAR) radio communications in Canada.

A working group representing the Canadian SAR community developed a proposal to assign a new common radio frequency to allow SAR first responders from different agencies to communicate with each other at the site of an incident.

Further, the proposal calls for a common civil air frequency to be assigned to facilitate communication between air and ground search groups.

Called *SARIAN F*, these common frequencies will improve co-ordination among the different agencies.

See *SARSCENE* Magazine, Vol 14 #2 for more information.

Weatheradio broadcasts in Inuktitut

Weatheradio, Environment Canada's service that broadcasts current weather conditions, severe weather watches and warnings 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is

now broadcasting information in Inuktitut for the people of Nunavut.

In addition to the Weatheradio service, people living in the Iqaluit, Cape Dorset, Rankin Inlet, Arviat and Resolute areas can call a toll-free number for weather forecasts if they do not own a Weatheradio receiver. By calling 1-867-979-6448, people can hear their weather forecast in English and then in Inuktitut.

There are 167 transmitters located across Canada and receivers can be purchased from electronics retailers.

Funded by the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund, this project is described on the Meteorological Service of Canada's website.

EC 1/00

Canadian Avalanche Centre now incorporated

The new Canadian Avalanche Centre, announced in November 2004, will serve as Canada's national public avalanche safety organization.

Operated by the Canadian Avalanche Association, the Centre wants to bring Canadian avalanche expertise under one roof, maximize the impact of public funding applied to public safety/prevention work related to snow safety and ensure best practices on response and prevention are shared across the country — not just Western Canada.

Organizations that have been instrumental in helping the Centre include the B.C. Provincial Emergency Program, Parks Canada, Meteorological Service of Canada, National Search and Rescue Secretariat and the Canadian Avalanche Foundation.

www.avalanche.ca



Alzheimer Disease: the SAR effort

The Alzheimer Society of Canada recently embarked on an initiative to enhance the Safely Home™ — Alzheimer Wandering Registry program with the support and assistance of the police and search and rescue (SAR) communities.

Presented at *SARSCENE* 2004, this session gave an update of the initiative and highlighted three key components of the project:

- **SEARCH** is an Emergency — a pre-plan search manual for organizations that provide care to people with Alzheimer Disease was reviewed in detail.

- **Tough Issues** — Technical Monitoring - a draft ethical guideline addressing this issue was presented and discussed.

- **Alzheimer Disease: A Resource for Police and SAR Personnel** — A preview was shown of this resource, created to help police and search and rescue personnel recognize and understand situations involving a person with Alzheimer Disease. The DVD familiarizes participants with the symptoms of the disease, communication strategies, the Safely Home program and SAR strategies.

This initiative will be featured in the next issue of *SARSCENE* Magazine. For more information on the Safely Home™ project and technical monitoring, visit www.alzheimer.ca/english/safelyhome/techmonitoring-intro.htm.

SAR Tech of the year

A SAR Tech with 435 Sqn at 17 Wing Winnipeg was named the SAR Tech of the Year by the Para Rescue Association of Canada last September.

Sgt. Andrew McLean was presented the award at National SAREX 2004 in Comox, B.C. for his dedication to duty and for his quick initiative and medical skills to save an injured man's life after a severe parachuting accident.

Since 1992, the Para Rescue Association has presented its annual award to a SAR Tech to recognize outstanding service contribution to the SAR community in an outstanding rescue or for continued high performance.

Contenders for the Canadian Forces new fixed-wing SAR aircraft

A new Canadian Forces fixed-wing search and rescue (SAR) aircraft may soon be waiting in the wings.

Announced in March, the Canadian Forces have \$1.3 billion to spend on a search and rescue replacement for the CC-115 Buffalo.

Currently, the CC-130 Hercules aircraft is tasked for search and rescue, but after this purchase, it will be available to return to transport duty.

The government has said it wants delivery by late 2005, but those involved in the process of supplying the new aircraft say it will likely be 2006 or 2007 because of a slight delay.

The requirements for the aircraft are being defined now and a letter of interest will then go out to Industry Canada.

The two contenders include the C-27J Spartan, jointly developed by Alenia Aeronautica and Lockheed Martin, and the C-295, manufactured by CASA/EADS, a joint initiative between Spain and the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company.

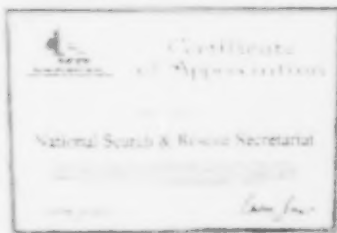
There are differences between the two, including cargo space, size, take-off and landing weights, equipment and speed.

Depending on the costs involved, the Canadian Forces will receive between 12 and 15 of these new aircraft.



Secretariat receives safe boating honour

In September 2004, the Canadian Safe Boating Council presented the National Search and Rescue Secretariat with a certificate of appreciation for support of prevention programs in marine safety, notably through the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund and the management of the national search and rescue program.



The certificate was presented to Jean Murray, the Secretariat's Executive Director, at the annual meeting in Whistler, B.C. by Barbara Byers, Chair of the Council.

Lifesaving Society's snowmobiling safety video

A new video produced by the Lifesaving Society's Newfoundland and Labrador Sled Smart program is aimed at educating snowmobilers on staying safe during the season.

The 24-minute video highlights the dangers of snowmobile travel on ice surfaces and offers advice on how to stay safe while traveling on ice-covered bodies of water.

Produced under the Sled Smart program, the video covers the following topics:

- Ice conditions
- Crossing ice surfaces
- Ice rescue
- Roads, railways, transmission lines and other hazards
- Alcohol and the law.

Funded in part by the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund, the video is available from the Lifesaving Society for \$49.95. For more information, visit <http://lifesaving.nfld.net> or e-mail lifeguard@seascape.com.

Shore-based cold water rescue team members receive Bronze Cross Certificates

by Robert Lynch

Two members of Newfoundland and Labrador's Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade's Cold Water Rescue Team have successfully completed a 30-hour Bronze Cross Course offered by the Lifesaving Society of Canada. The course focuses on areas including lifesaving procedures, swimming endurance and rescue techniques in complex situations involving two or more casualties.

Team Leader Bill Ryan said, "the Brigade has always had a progressive training schedule that offers its members access to the latest and most advanced training techniques in firefighting, high angle rescue, vehicle extrication and cold water rescue. Since forming the Water Rescue Team in 1997, the brigade has given full support to the training program."

Robert Lynch is a 17-year veteran volunteer firefighter with the Brigade.



Team members Dave Earle and Bill Ryan of the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade's Cold Water Rescue Team receive Bronze Cross Certificates.

Canadian Hurricane Centre improves availability of weather information

The Canadian Hurricane Centre (CHC) has developed three new ways the public can be made aware of important forecasting information.

Currently information is available

through the media and the Centre's website.

The public now has the option to receive free information through an e-mail subscription service, mobile device access service or "Really Simple Syndication" — RSS for short.

Mobile device access is for those who have internet-enabled cellular phones or a personal digital assistant, or PDA. The RSS is a relatively new internet-based technology that allows a subscriber to receive customized news information from a variety of sources.

Peter Bowyer, Program Manager for the CHC, said, "the three new products, in concert with media broadcasts and our website, will help make this essential information more readily accessible to people so they can use it to make better-informed decisions."

www.hurricanecentre.ca

New safe boating agreement between Canada and the United States

The Canadian Safe Boating Council (CSBC) and National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) have signed a formal memorandum of understanding that says each will work to support the other organization and its mission.

Both organizations are national, non-profit associations. NASBLA is responsible for the development and implementation of state boating programs and CSBC is responsible for the promotion of safe and responsible boating in Canada.

This agreement allows for more opportunities to strengthen national and local mutual efforts and to share each organization's resources to further the mission of safe boating. The mutual support for programs will make it easier to identify future boating trends.

The memorandum was signed by Barbara Byers, CSBC Chair and Fred Messmann, NASBLA President at the Council's Annual General Meeting, Sept. 25, 2004.

A Focus on 442 Squadron

442 Squadron Buffalo joins U.S. search incident

A Buffalo and crew were tasked from 442 Sqn to assist in a joint American-Canadian search mission this past October.

The crew was called to assist the rescue of two men off the disabled sailing vessel, Kamaa. A distress signal was picked up from the vessel's Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon and the U.S. Coast Guard was able to locate the Kamaa.

The weather was extremely rough with high winds and waves while the Buffalo prepared to drop emergency gear. In the end, the Buffalo did not have to drop the gear, but ascended instead and acted as a communications platform for the vessel and the U.S. Coast Guard helicopter.

Capt. Hayward Keats, aircraft commander of the Buffalo, said "the procedures between Canadian and American SAR are very similar, which is the key to interoperability. It was very easy to work with our American counterparts."

442 Squadron wins Mynarksi Trophy for courageous rescue

A Cormorant crew from 442 Sqn was presented with the Mynarksi Trophy this past October for significant contribution to search and rescue in Canada.

The crew was recognized for a mission in February 2004 in which they battled poor weather and cold conditions to rescue crew members from a 79-foot fishing vessel, Hope Bay.

Hope Bay capsized just after midnight in the Queen Charlotte Sound, north of Vancouver Island, B.C. A Buffalo arrived first on-site, located the area where the vessel had capsized and then provided flare illumination for the Cormorant crew.

Despite the 20-knot winds and 15-foot swells and a long operation,

the Cormorant located and recovered three of the four Hope Bay crew members that night. They returned the next day, and with help from the Canadian Coast Guard, recovered the last crew member. Unfortunately only one crew member survived.

The trophy is Canada's highest award for excellence in the field of air search and rescue.

442 Squadron Cormorant crew rescue injured hunter

A hunter injured by a falling tree was rescued by 442 Sqn Cormorant 100 km north of Bella Bella, B.C.

Despite fair weather, the mission was still very challenging to due the rocky and mountainous terrain. As well, there were numerous rock and tree slides in the area adding to the perilous situation. The darkness and the terrain made it difficult to find the injured 39-year old Swiss man and even more challenging to reach him.

The SAR Techs were hoisted to a small ledge and then climbed 50 metres to the hunter's location to hoist him into the helicopter.

"It was a physically demanding rescue," said Sgt. JP Cossette, SAR Tech and team leader for the rescue. "It was very steep with a lot of loose rocks, trees and mud, which was a more serious issue when trying to hoist the litter out. We decided to hoist from where the hunter was, rather than the ledge, because of the hazardous conditions."

Master Cpl. Andrew MacKenzie said it was a challenging mission, "but the efficiency of our team enabled us to reach the patient and get him aboard the helicopter as quickly as possible."

The art of casualty simulation — an update

The following article is an update from Vol. 12, #3 issue of SARSCENE Magazine
by Gregory Frankson

When it comes to emergency response training exercises, it is very important for the participants to interact with casualties who genuinely appear to be hurt and who react as though their injuries are real. Casualty simulation — preparing otherwise healthy people to appear and act like they are injured — is a crucial aspect to replicating the urgency and realism of what emergency personnel may face during a real public health emergency.

Casualty simulation came to Canada from England in the late 1940s. Its original purpose was to prepare rescue personnel and members of the military to deal with injured disaster and combat victims by presenting them with realistically made up wounds.

For rescue workers, casualty simulation enabled them to recognize and assess the wounds they might

actually encounter. For the military, it also served as a form of battle inoculation.

Today, well-trained casualty simulators can skillfully re-create injuries and illnesses ranging from burns and hemorrhages to shock and smallpox.

They also coach casualties on how a person with the illness or injury they are simulating would react to treatment from emergency response personnel. Their participation in exercises greatly enhances the preparedness of Canada's emergency health services to respond if and when the next disaster occurs.

In the future, there will courses offered to interested members of the public to become certified casualty simulators in jurisdictions that have an identified need for such personnel. The Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Public Health Agency of Canada is the national certifying agency for the casualty simulation program. ■

Gregory Frankson is an Emergency Preparedness Trainer, Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response, Public Health Agency of Canada.

Casualty Simulation Certification

There are three levels of Casualty Simulation certification — Basic, Instructor and Instructor-Trainer.

Courses are held when a need for more Basic Casualty Simulators in a province or territory is identified by the Emergency Health Services Director in the affected jurisdiction.

The only prerequisite for participants in the Basic Course is possession of a valid First Aid certificate.

Participants in the program are not charged for attending training courses. The costs associated with the course are assumed by the taxpayer.

Casualty Simulators, once trained, operate in a support role at publicly-funded civilian emergency preparedness exercises in their home province or territory.

Any person who becomes a Casualty Simulator agrees to participate on a volunteer basis in exercises in their home province or territory.

Once trained at the Basic level, a Casualty Simulator may choose to become an Instructor or an Instructor-Trainer when such courses are offered by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

For more information on casualty simulation e-mail Gregory Frankson at gregory_frankson@phac-aspc.gc.ca.

Upcoming Events

8th World Congress on Stress, Trauma, and Coping
February 16-20, 2005
Baltimore, Maryland

SAR 2005
March 8-10, 2005
Miami, Florida

2005 National Hurricane Conference
March 21-25, 2005
New Orleans, Louisiana

Alberta-Saskatchewan SAR Conference 2005
April 15-17, 2005
Lloydminster, Alberta

Canadian Safe Boating Awareness Week
May 21-29, 2005

SAR 05
May 25-28, 2005
Oakland, California

Islands in the Atlantic Conference
Spring 2005
Prince Edward Island

International Symposium on Mountain Rescue
June 13-19, 2005
Vail, Colorado

Canadian Safe Boating Council Symposium
September 22-25, 2005

International SAR Competition 2005
September 29 to October 1, 2005
Halifax, Nova Scotia

SARSCENE 2005
October 5-8, 2005
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
Toll free: 1-800-727-9414

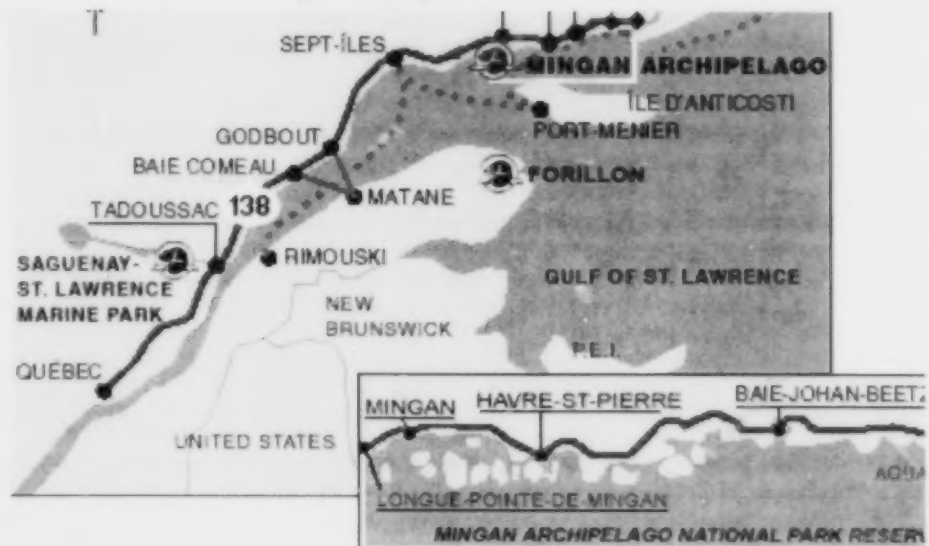
For a complete list, visit www.nss.gc.ca and click on **Events**.

The Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary's 2005 calendar is now available. To order your copy, visit www.ccca-gcac.org.



Mingan kayaker saved thanks to prevention project

A prevention project that began in 2001 has proven essential to the Mingan Archipelago area.



On Sept. 2, 2004, kayaker Ania Holub and her mother were paddling in the Mingan Archipelago when Ms. Holub lost control of her kayak and an open hatch began to fill with water.

Located on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the area is very remote, the weather conditions can change very suddenly and the distance to rescue services can be extreme.

The winds were strong and waves were four metres high while Ms. Holub drifted away in the tidal currents, holding onto the unsubmerged portion of her kayak.

She used her VHF radio to put in a distress call but was unable to provide details of her position. The Canadian Coast Guard and Parks Canada launched a search for her, relying on details from her mother, who had safely reached shore.

Before setting out, Ms. Holub and her mother had stopped and asked for kayaking advice, a service provided as part of the Organization for Prevention and Safety (OPS) — Sea Kayak project. They were given information about the hazards of marine navigation, given assistance with their itinerary and showed how to use the VHF radio in the event of an emergency.

Ms. Holub spent close to three hours in the water, but was rescued because she remembered being told that by turning on the VHF radio regularly, its signal would be picked up by communications towers which would then determine her position.

Had it not been for this prevention and awareness program, Ms. Holub would not have been found alive. Her

battered kayak is now on display at the OPS — Sea Kayak project office to increase the awareness of kayak safety.

The first of its kind to operate in Québec, the Organization for Prevention and Safety — Sea Kayak project was sponsored by Parks Canada and funded by the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund. The goal is to create an educational program to enhance kayakers' knowledge of the marine environment and safe practices.

The Mingan Archipelago was seeing an increase in the number of incidents involving kayakers and a lack of educational tools and services. The awareness program included water safety signalization designed for kayakers to reduce the risk and severity of sea kayak incidents in remote areas. It also focused on improving the search and rescue response to such incidents.

Although weather plays a large factor in kayak incidents, reports produced by the Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve show incidents are often caused by a lack of skill and knowledge of sea kayak safety and techniques.

Through this project, a safety and rescue training program for sea kayakers was developed, which included a video on safety and self-rescue, signalization panels that indicate the dangers of navigation, volunteer patrols and an information centre.

Since the project began, more than 1,650 kayakers have been advised about safe practices that should be used while paddling ■

NIF project No. PC 2/01

SAR IN THE WILD WEST

A LOOK BACK AT SARSCENE 2004

ONE VOICE, UNITED IN SAR was the theme for this year's SARSCENE Workshop, in Calgary, Alberta. Almost 600 people attended the 13th annual gathering of search and rescue professionals from across Canada and internationally to share ideas, best practices and lessons learned.

Toronto HUSAR team wins this year's SARSCENE Games

by Carole Smith, NSS Games Co-ordinator

The 2004 SARSCENE Games were held on a sunny autumn day at Centenary Park in Calgary, Alberta. Situated on St. Patrick's Island in the Bow River, with the Calgary skyline as a backdrop, this urban park offered a mix of forest, brush and rocky shoreline for this year's competition.

Although there were no international entrants this year, and some teams had to withdraw due to actual SAR missions, a good cross-section of Canadian teams took part from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Newfoundland and Labrador. The judging staff included SAR specialists from:

- Calgary Police
- Canadian Forces
- Edmonton Police
- HM Coastguard, United Kingdom
- Washington State Emergency Management, United States
- National Search and Rescue Secretariat
- Parks Canada
- RCMP
- Rocky Mountain Adventure Medicine, and
- Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers
- The Amateur Radio Emergency

Service of Calgary provided seamless communications as well as the Games command post, and St. John Ambulance was on standby for First Aid. As always, the Games would not have been a success without the hard work of staff and volunteers who set up the stations in the pre-dawn hours and cleared the site at the end of a long day.

The Challenge

The four-person teams were assessed on their performance through six stations:

- Emergency scene management and medical
- Visual search effectiveness (detection)
- Search management
- Evidence search
- Navigation
- Skills relay.

The competition was intense yet friendly. Teams gave enthusiastic and professional performances, with a narrow point spread between competitors. This year's roster included two returning SARSCENE Games Champions: Foothills SAR from Turner Valley, Alberta (2001, 2002) and Toronto HUSAR's "Centre of the Universe" (2003).

In first place this year was the Toronto HUSAR team, with Alberta's Foothills SAR coming in second. Newfoundland and Labrador's Exploits SAR team placed third.

The SARSCENE Games also featured a special award for the best performance in the medical event, sponsored by Rocky Mountain Adventure Medicine Inc., and won by Toronto's HUSAR team. The team received a medical kit and a set of SAM™ splints.

In addition to taking home the Wm. Slaughter SARSCENE Games Cup for the year, the top-ranked team also received a special-edition life-jacket for each member. Generously donated by Nautilus by Protexion, these custom-fitted jackets are inscribed with "SARSCENE 2004 Champions."

Thank-you to all the teams and

judges who supported the 2004 SARSCENE Games, particularly for your energy and enthusiasm; your dedication of time and resources; and your willingness to share your SAR skills and knowledge with one another.

Charlottetown 2005

Who will take the Slaughter Cup home in 2005? Stay tuned for next year's event in Charlottetown, PEI. The competition for SAR dogs and handlers is scheduled to return next year. Check the SARSCENE 2005 website for more information as October 2005 approaches.

Volunteer Search and Rescue: Dedication, Challenge and the Way Ahead

This year's plenary, which followed the opening greetings by a number of local dignitaries and high-ranking representatives of the search and rescue (SAR) community, focussed on volunteers in SAR. As Jean Murray, Executive Director of the National Search and Rescue Secretariat, explained, "support for volunteers is one of the directions raised in last year's National Search and Rescue Program and one of the key issues we need to pursue." To help do this, representatives from volunteer organizations explained the state of volunteerism in their organizations and their major challenges.



Alberta perspective

The plenary continued with the view from Alberta. Brad Marshall, representing the SARSCENE 2004 local host organization the Search and Rescue Association of Alberta, took a business perspective to delivery of SAR services by asking "is the service of good quality, is it delivered

fast, is it delivered cheap?" Cost is the variable that is sacrificed, and it is often the ground volunteer that pays.

Given the demand on volunteers for money as well as time, the question of sustained commitment is paramount, said Mr. Marshall. His solution lies in giving the volunteer more direct input and authority into how search and rescue is delivered.

"This, of course, requires a considerable shift in how search and rescue as a whole receives top-down direction in Canada through legislation and government policy." This would motivate the volunteer to remain committed.



Marine volunteers

Robert Petitpas, a member of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary for over 20 years, became Chief Executive Officer (CEO) this year, replacing Harry Strong, who served as CEO for almost 17 years. Mr. Petitpas began by noting the changes in the marine SAR world: increasingly large passenger ships on the St. Lawrence River and the Pacific coast, a boom in small boats and pleasure craft activity, new marine conservation areas, often in remote locations, changes in government that affect the marine community, and increased activity in the off-shore oil and gas industry.

"The implications of all that," said Mr. Petitpas, "mean we have a higher probability of SAR incidents."

"The Coast Guard Auxiliary has, at this moment, close to 5,000 members," explained Mr. Petitpas. "And we have the same mission as the Coast Guard as far as search and rescue is concerned — and we cover the same area. There are about 1,400 boats, each insured for an average of \$125,000."

The problem in marine SAR is not recruitment, but the cost of training new members, Mr. Petitpas explained. "There are also



differences as you go across Canada. In Newfoundland, you have a lot of fishermen who do SAR with their own boats, and in Quebec and Ontario you have a lot of pleasure craft boaters. In the West coast, there are often community-owned boats. We really have five different regions acting differently across the country."

In the air

John Davidson, the President of the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association (CASARA), represented the SAR aviation community, some 3,000 volunteers and approximately 400 aircraft located across Canada. The mystique and excitement of airplanes, said Mr. Davidson, are the hook that attracts volunteers.

"Volunteers come forward for a number of reasons: some personal, some altruistic and some financial."

Regardless of motivation, he added, "we must review their abilities and fit them into our organization to take fullest advantage of their skills and experience." But there is a limited budget for keeping the zones active and providing certification, so not everyone who applies is accepted.

"CASARA has developed training programs for our core positions: pilot, navigator, spotter and search coordinator. Each of these positions has its own curriculum, which each volunteer must complete depending on the chosen crew position. The training requirements demonstrate the investment that CASARA is willing to provide our volunteers while our volunteers provide the drive and desire to be trained. Then our volunteers are crewed with other experienced members and given their final check-out to attain full certification."

After that, how do you maintain interest and self-sufficiency, asked Mr. Davidson. "It's easier to keep trained volunteers with innovation and out-of-the-box thinking than to find and train replacements," he said. If CASARA cannot satisfy a volunteer's needs, then they will continually be looking for replacements, he noted, rather than moving the organization forward.



On the ground

This presentation marked the last for Monica Ahlstrom as President of the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada. She used the occasion to speak from her heart about her observations.

"I was speaking to Lloyd Gallagher earlier, who was fundamental in starting SARSCENE in the early days, and we were discussing how associations and groups really struggled to get along and to build partnerships early on when search and rescue really started to develop in Canada," Ms. Ahlstrom explained.

"There was this sort of turf war that used to go on.

However, in the last years I would have to say that I have seen a huge paradigm shift - and that really no longer exists. I think we have a very solid community of search and rescue people in Canada. I think the unpaid and the paid professionals get along fine," she added.

The problem lies in the lack of public knowledge and awareness of search and rescue which translates into a funding problem. "The bigger problem is that people in a decision-making capacity don't know who we are, don't know what we do, and haven't been approached in a manner that allows us to basically step up to the plate and say we need this funding," she said.

"As volunteers in Canada, we have done a bad job of letting our MPs, MLAs and the people who make decisions know who we are. We've also done a bad job of letting the public, to a certain extent, understand how search and rescue works in Canada."

She closed by recognizing the service that both volunteer and paid search and rescue workers provide.

"As a volunteer," she said, "I have the option to say 'no, I think I'll pass today.' Whereas the people who are paid have to go out and risk their lives whether they want to or not. I have always been deeply respectful of the people who, whether they are paid or not, have really stepped up to the plate."

"I would like to say," she concluded,



"that is has been an honour and a deep privilege to serve with the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada and to be a member of search and rescue in general, because I can't think of an organization anywhere in the world where there are such great people."

Survey of Canada's Search and Rescue Volunteers

Search and rescue (SAR) volunteers across the country are helping the National Search and Rescue Secretariat to collect basic information on the current profile of the volunteer SAR community. In response to national statistics which show a general decline in the numbers of all volunteers across Canada, this survey is intended to capture trends and issues specific to those who work in search and rescue, with a goal of ensuring a sustainable future for the SAR volunteer community.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with the heads of the national SAR volunteer associations, and will be distributed through them to their members. In the spring of 2005, the Secretariat will share the results of the survey with participating organizations and agencies.

Presentations

This year's SARSCENE workshop had a definite Western flavour with many of the presentations focusing on SAR issues in Canada's west, such as Clair Israelson's presentation on managing avalanche risk; Tony Boschmann's presentation on advanced bear strategies; the Alberta Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) presented by Greg Curtis and Miles Mozel; and the role of volunteers in the B.C. fires presented by Don Blakely.

There were also a number of international delegates who presented on a variety of SAR issues around the world.

For example, David Oelrichs of Australia discussed boating safety while Maj. Erwin Deolet discussed the challenges of air and marine SAR in Belgium and a close look at France's Sea Rescue Society —

Société nationale de sauvetage en mer — by François Célérier.

Dr. Don Cooper and Jack Frost presented material on a ground SAR detection experiment in the United States while COMO Everette Tucker discussed the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary's program Operation BoatSmart.



Rescue personnel from the Alberta Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) walk through a field after tending to a rescue "victim." STARS will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2005.

Weather tools for SAR

Up-to-date weather information critical to SAR is provided by the Meteorological Service of Canada (MSC). After Mike Hewson and Barry Green gave an overview of the tools the MSC uses, there were two suggestions for new services. The first one would provide search managers with a toll-free number to obtain the latest weather information in the search area such as that used by the media, and the second would inform visitors to national parks about recent wind, precipitation and temperature charts in the backcountry regions. The speakers agreed to further discuss the feasibility of both ideas.

Air SAR

Many of the air SAR presentations focused on the role of new technology, including Jim Craig and Les Brace's discussion about technologies for tracking at night, Dr. Jocelyn Keillor's presentation about imaging systems in SAR, and an update of the Cospas-Sarsat satellite system by Jim King.



Calgary Police Service's HAWC 1 helicopter and crew demonstrate their technique for rescuing a victim when landing is not an option.



SAR Techs demonstrate their skills after jumping from a Canadian Forces Buffalo aircraft.

Marine SAR

Barbara Byers presented information about the Canadian Safe Boating Council's study on mandatory personal flotation device wear and whether it is feasible. Peter Garapick presented information about safety concerns for small, older vessels and discussed a new Transport Canada boating safety program to be launched in the spring of 2005.

Other marine topics included a discussion of the major marine disaster plan (MAJMAR) by Derek Smith and marine simulation programs in SAR by Billy Bean of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Capt. Tony Patterson of the Marine Institute in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ground SAR

Many of the ground SAR presentations focused the volunteer role in SAR, a follow-up of the plenary, and others discussed national training standards, ice rescue, the RCMP police dog service and the First Nations' role in search and recovery.

Linda LeDuc and Sgt. Tim Charlebois presented information about the joint Ontario Provincial Police-Alzheimer Society of Canada project, Safely Home™, which facilitated the creation of a search pre-plan manual for long-term care facilities for Alzheimer patients. ■

To order CDs from SARSCENE 2004, contact Bob Black at contape@cyberus.ca or consult the list on the SARSCENE 2004 home page at www.nss.gc.ca, click on SARSCENE.

SAREX 2004

SAR Techs from across Canada descended on Comox, B.C. this past September to compete for 11 different awards at SAREX 2004.

From Sept. 21-25, each team of SAR Techs worked together to demonstrate their skills in these five events: search, rescue, parachuting accuracy, medical and maintenance.

"I was impressed with the ease in which units from all over the country grouped together to form teams and compete," said Captain Kevin Toone, a 442 Sqn Cormorant pilot and the deputy exercise co-ordinator.

"I think that is one of the main reasons why an annual SAREX is so important as part of our operational training plan. With a mandate to respond to distress anywhere in the country, we must maintain our ability to operate as a team," Capt. Toone added.

The focus of the exercise is to develop rescue co-operation, test alerting and notification systems, and cross-train in rescue procedures and techniques in the event of a large-scale search and rescue operation. The annual exercise is also used to exchange information and experiences gained, answer issues and update the SAR community on changes and updates that have occurred since the last SAREX. In addition, it provides a platform for gathering SAR-related research and data in live exercise scenarios.



For the medical event, each team of three was assessed on its ability to efficiently and effectively triage, evaluate and treat three survivors at a mock-up aircraft crash site and then evacuate the

most appropriate casualty — all in 45 minutes.

In the end, 103 Sqn from Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador, was victorious and won the Diamond Trophy, which is awarded to the unit with the best overall performance in all five events. ■

SAREX Award Winners

After four days of intense competition, these are the winners of the 11 SAREX Awards:

- Team Spirit Award — 413 Sqn, Greenwood
- Search and Rescue Trophy — 442 Sqn, Comox
- Parachute Association Honour Roll — 103 Sqn, Gander
- Allison Trophy — The combined Combat Support Service team (formed with one SAR Tech each from 417 Sqn, Cold Lake; 439 Sqn, Bagotville; and 444 Sqn, Goose Bay)



Back row: Sgt. Knubley, MCpl. Usphall and MCpl. Benoit.
Front row: MGen. Bouchard (Commander 1 CAD), Capt. Toone and Mr. Tracy (Team Cormorant).

Cormorant Trophy awarded to 442 Squadron from 19 Wing Comox

Operating under dangerous conditions, the Cormorant crew from 442 Sqn, Comox, was able to save two people who had survived an aircraft crash.

While returning from a SAR deployment in Calgary in September 2003, 442 Sqn was tasked to investigate a reported Emergency Locator Transmitter near the Litton, B.C. area.

A 442 Sqn Buffalo had also been tasked and had deployed two SAR Techs to the site by parachute, but they were unable to extract the survivors from the site, which was crucial to their survival.

Located in a very tight mountain river valley, the crash site was on the edge of a clearing on a high-angle slope. One survivor was trapped in the aircraft, so even though the area was accessible, any maneuvering of the helicopter near the aircraft could have caused it to slide down the mountain.

Further, the team was unable to use flares to illuminate the area because of the risk of starting a forest fire.

"It was a particularly difficult rescue given the mountainous terrain, weather and darkness," said Capt. Kevin Toone.

After maneuvering the helicopter, the team was able to reach and stabilize the casualties. After an hour or so, the four SAR Techs, an Emergency Health Services Technician and the two patients were extracted.

The Cormorant Trophy for Helicopter Rescue recognized the "Canadian civilian, government or military crew that has performed the most demanding helicopter rescue of the year." The Trophy is presented by Agusta-Westland/European Helicopter Industries, manufacturers of the Cormorant. ■

- Leslie L. Irvin Trophy — Sgt. Kevin Bergquist, 417 Sqn, Cold Lake
- Sullivan Trophy — 103 Sqn, Gander
- Maintenance Trophy — 435 Sqn, Winnipeg
- Diamond Trophy — 103 Sqn, Gander
- SAR Tech of the Year Award — Sgt. Andrew McLean, 435 Sqn, Winnipeg
- Over 40 Trophy — WO Brad Gough, 442 Sqn, Comox
- CASARA National SAR Excellence Award — CASARA 2 team, B.C.

Radio communications, and prevention

The following four projects are supported by the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund.

Destruction of Hurricane Hazel remembered 50 years later

It wasn't expected to hit the Toronto area with such force, but Hurricane Hazel packed a punch on Oct. 15, 1954 and killed 81 people. Although the hurricane had traveled rapidly through the United States, it was expected to dissipate and weaken into non-hurricane status.

As a result, people were largely unprepared and the damage was extreme. Thousands were left homeless and the costs were estimated to be \$100 million (about \$1 billion today).

Environment Canada, with funding

from the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund, has decided to study the impact of hurricanes in Canada, particularly on the East Coast.

The potential hazards from hurricanes have not been well-recognized in Canada and Environment Canada hopes to change that with this study. The project will record data on waves, precipitation and wind to be better able to forecast these events and make the public better informed.

Specifically, the data will be used to raise awareness of the potential impact and hazards of these storms; improve wind, wave and precipitation forecasts; develop improved computer generated prediction tools for wind, waves and precipitation; and identify trends in hurricane structures to be used as a guide for flying search and rescue missions in hurricanes.

Although the project began in 2003 and does not finish until 2006, a 50th anniversary documentary of Hurricane Hazel has been produced. The first-hand accounts of the havoc and chaos that ensued will help raise awareness of the devastating effects of hurricanes. The video is available at www.hurricanehazel.ca. ■
EC 6/03

Lakehead SAR unit upgrades prevention program

Public education is key and the Lakehead Search and Rescue (SAR) Unit is well-versed in the

importance of keeping people informed about safety in the forests of Northwestern Ontario.

For over 40 years the team has been teaching the general public about preventative SAR using flip charts, handouts and overheads. To keep pace with modern teaching techniques and keep its audiences interested and well-informed, the Lakehead SAR Unit has obtained funding from the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund to modernize its full range of presentation packages.

By modernizing the presentations into PowerPoint, the unit will be able to reach more individuals and groups through lectures, workshops, mail presentations and more.

Further, upgrading the programs will make it easy to make changes to presentations as new survival techniques, search strategies and advanced technologies emerge.

These prevention programs will also be available to other SAR units. ■

ON 2/04



Since 1985, the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) of Alberta has contributed to the care of more than 11,000 critically ill and injured patients. With funding from the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund, STARS has been able to implement its Night Vision Google program that provides the opportunity for 24-hour SAR operations. STARS CEO D. Gregory Powell stands with Jean Murray, Executive Director of the National Search and Rescue Secretariat, after unveiling STARS' new SAR logo to acknowledge the Secretariat's role in providing the funding.

simulation programs projects aid SAR teams

Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary's marine simulation program

With the rising costs and decreasing budgets, it is becoming harder to efficiently train search and rescue (SAR) personnel.

The Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary (CCGA) in the Pacific region has found a solution: develop a new volunteer SAR training program that uses emerging technology to improve the safety, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the existing training program.

Sponsored by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and funded through the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund, CCGA Pacific will purchase a marine simulator and integrate it into the existing training program, which will improve the quality and quantity of training that takes place. In turn, this increases the SAR effectiveness and safety of crew members.

The CCGA Pacific has 1,400 volunteers, but each receives only a limited amount of on-water training — between 40 and 48 hours per year. Depending on the crew member's skill and experience, a large portion of this time is devoted to familiarization and navigation lessons, with a smaller portion dedicated to SAR techniques.

Funding restraints mean crew members may spend as little as two hours a month on the water in dedicated training time, and they may never encounter the dangerous conditions they are likely to face during a SAR incident.

The marine simulator software the CCGA will use is currently used to train ship's captains and crew members in non-emergency and emergency situations. Developed by the Centre for Marine Simulation and Virtual Marine Technology Inc., the software uses real marine charts to simulate accurate real-life marine environments and a wide variety of marine conditions can be easily created and manipulated by trained instructors.

It is estimated the new initiative will decrease on-water training by at least 20 hours, while crew members will become more experienced, more knowledgeable and more effective on the water after training with the marine simulator.

Not only will this increase the effectiveness and efficiency of marine SAR training, but it will enhance boating safety education.

The CCGA Pacific has a well-established boating safety program in many coastal and inland communities and members attend hundreds of boating safety events each year.

These events are already an opportune time for members to distribute safety information, but the added marine simulation component will add a dynamic element to the training for all involved.

DFO 3/04 ■

New communications platform for Kent Harrison Search and Rescue

With more users relying on radio communications, especially search and rescue (SAR) groups, Industry



Canada, the federal government agency responsible for radio communications, was forced to narrow the VHF channel bandwidth to accommodate everyone.

Because of this action, the radio equipment being used by the Kent Harrison Search and Rescue group in B.C. became obsolete and incompatible with other radio users in their narrow-bandwidth area. As such, the group's entire VHF communications system needed to be replaced, including mobile radios, portable radios and pagers.

Sponsored by the B.C. Provincial Emergency Program and funded through the New Search and Rescue Initiatives Fund, the Kent Harrison SAR group was able to purchase the new communications equipment they needed. Further, the group donated its existing 13 Motorola 16-channel VHF radios to other SAR groups in the province who are not affected by the channel bandwidth changes.

BC 1/04 ■

For more information about the New SAR Initiatives Fund, visit www.nss.gc.ca and click on **New SAR Initiatives** in the top menu bar.

"SAR BQ" 2004

Responders prepare for large-scale rescue effort

by Marie Dominic Breault

LAST SUMMER, NAUTICAL RESPONDERS RECEIVED A CALL FROM CHRISTIAN ÉMOND. THEY RESPONDED BY GETTING TOGETHER AT THE MARINA DE SAUREL IN ORDER TO GET ON THE SAME PAGE AND IMPROVE THEIR TEAMWORK IN DEALING WITH SEARCH AND RESCUE CASES.

The SAR BQ concept, which was given a test run at Beaconsfield in 2003, was born of the desire of various stakeholders in the boating community to get together and to find out more about each other's activities. This year, the event was more than just a fun meeting with a barbecue.

Christian Émond, coxswain of an inshore rescue boat, exploited the idea of a friendly get-together around barbecues to help train a truly broad-based rescue team in his region. He had already met separately with a number of responders who cover the same territory — between Sorel and Contrecoeur-as his own crew. He was also aware that in the event of large-scale rescue operations, many of these people might be called upon to communicate and work with one another.

It was thus important for him to unify responses so that the work could become more streamlined and more effective. With the help of his fellow team members from GC-1205, Carl Marois and Caroline Villeneuve, he organized a meeting on August 4, 2004 right at the responders' workplace, the Marina de Saurel. Approximately fifty guests were invited, most of whom were members of the following organizations:

- Fire Department of Sorel-Tracy and Lavaltrie
- Sûreté du Québec
- Ambulance service of Sorel-Tracy
- Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons
- Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary (Sorel unit and Contrecoeur-Verchères unit)

- Inshore Rescue Boat Program of the Canadian Coast Guard
- Quebec Iron and Titanium

To breathe new life into this large team, Christian Émond wanted to get people on track to use a consistent method of operation. A representative of each of the above-mentioned entities came and described the specific mandate, members and equipment of their organization. Hubert Desgagnés, regional manager of the Marine Rescue Centre, gave a short talk on the interoperability of responders and on the specific characteristics of marine rescue. Robert Jinchereau, a search and rescue supervisor, then provided some information about the inshore rescue student program. Jean Tellier, of Transport Canada, also spoke about the role of the Office of Boating Safety.

Mr. Tellier was available throughout the meeting, to offer his

expertise on the subjects of prevention and Canadian standards applicable to pleasure boating. To round out the meeting, a period was reserved for visiting rescue vehicles at the location (fast rescue craft, fire truck, ambulances) and for demonstrations of such equipment as the retrieval net, the fire pump, the vacuum mattress, etc. This enabled people to become more familiar with the vehicles and equipment, and above all to get to know the



techniques of the various organizations.

Finally, the guests had an opportunity to have informal discussions amongst themselves while inhaling the tempting smells of the barbecues. This was an excellent opportunity for them to ask questions, to develop good relationships and to take another step forward in examining the logic of collaboration. Thanks to the SAR BQ, communications will without a doubt be easier amongst the responders of various organizations. ■

Lake Erie SAREX fosters partnership and interoperability

A ferry traveling between Fort Erie, Ont. and Buffalo, New York suffers mechanical and electrical faults in the main engine room. A fire breaks out and engine power is lost. There are 19 crew and 25 passengers onboard, but four of those passengers are missing and presumed to have gone overboard.

The Canadian Coast Guard, Central and Arctic Region, along with the United States Coast Guard, Group Buffalo, designed this simulated search and rescue (SAR) exercise to test and further develop interagency co-operation between Canadian and American

authorities in a realistic scenario.

The Sept. 18, 2004 exercise had 17 groups and agencies taking part — through co-ordination, planning, on the water or in the air.

The groups worked together to assist the ferry's crew and passengers, as well as searching for the four missing people — mannequins that had been placed in the water. All casualties were found, evacuated, treated for injuries and then dispatched to the hospital.

General communication between the players was good, but it was proposed they would be more effective if there was

a designated common operating channel for the American and Canadian marine SAR control and co-ordination on the Great Lakes. ■



Disabled vessels: the SAR role

by Mike Voigt

Similar to the Boy Scout motto, mariners must always "Be Prepared." Whether it is watching for changes in weather, ensuring one's vessel is in good condition and properly-equipped or having the appropriate charts on board, mariners should always have these words in mind.

In addition to following regulations for vessel construction, safety equipment, operator competency, rules of the road and other navigation regulations, mariners should, for example, always have a spare anchor with cable, reserve fuel, a well-tuned engine and drive chain plus all lines secured so they cannot foul the propeller.

The Canadian Coast Guard's (CCG) statistics on disabled vessels not in distress show these cases comprise a large proportion of marine SAR cases in total.

Even though these cases are not life-threatening, there are safety concerns with leaving vessels unassisted at sea so the CCG has had a "towing policy" published since 1960 (originally adopted by the Canadian Marine Service) for the provision of assistance, including towing, on a limited basis and not in competition with commercial or private interests, in aid of disabled vessels.

SAR responders and all mariners should be aware of the main points of these procedures:

It is the mariner's responsibility to make their own arrangements for towing and salvage when they require such services. The CCG and Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary (CCGA) do not tow vessels on request and do not compete with towing and salvage companies.

For disabled vessels in distress, the CCG and CCGA will provide towing assistance if it is deemed by the Commanding Officer of the CCG/CCGA vessel to be the best way of preventing loss of life and injury. In other situations, assistance will only be provided after efforts to arrange private or commercial assistance have failed. For safety reasons, the CCG will monitor the situation, by marine radio or other communications, to ensure the disabled vessel arrives at a place of refuge.

The procedures have also clarified that when a CCG vessel is

tasked to assist a disabled vessel in a non-distress situation, that this vessel will normally complete any other critical mission in which it is currently engaged, such as a fisheries law enforcement operation, before proceeding to the disabled vessel assistance. This means mariners may have to wait if there is no immediate danger.

A Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre (JRCC) or Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre (MRSC) should be notified by the mariner if their vessel breaks down at sea. This is done by contacting the nearest CCG Marine Communication and Traffic Services Centre. The CCG will keep in contact with the mariner to determine if persons are in distress. The ultimate determination remains with the master or operator of the disabled vessel as to if the vessel is in a distress situation or an urgency situation where safety is a concern. In this situation, the JRCC/MRSC will immediately task a unit to assist.

For vessels that require assistance in non-distress situations, a Maritime Assistance Request Broadcast asking for assistance for the vessel will normally be issued on VHF Channel 16. If there is no response to the broadcast, the JRCC/MRSC will task a vessel to respond.

In summary, for safety reasons the CCG/CCGA will continue to provide limited assistance such as towing to disabled vessels to the nearest place of refuge in non-distress situations only after efforts to arrange private or commercial assistance have failed.

Of special importance to SAR responders is a reminder to always report information you may receive on any SAR incident, regardless of degree of emergency, to your JRCC/MRSC and to wait for a tasking from the JRCC/MRSC before proceeding on non-life-threatening cases. Of course, in a distress or perceived distress situation it may be prudent to get underway first and advise JRCC/MRSC as soon as possible.

Further information on these procedures can be found at www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/sar/docs/VesselProcedures_e.htm. ■

Mike Voigt is the Superintendent of Search and Rescue, CCG, in Nova Scotia

EMERGENCY INFORMATION for boaters on the Ottawa River

In the event of an emergency you are advised to use a cell phone to call 911 and report your situation to the police who will co-ordinate the response.

You should also call on VHF Channel 16, if you have marine VHF radio fitted to your boat, to alert any nearby craft similarly equipped.

However...

Be aware that as an inland waterway the Ottawa River is not covered by the distress monitoring service provided by Canadian Coast Guard Marine Communications and Traffic Services.

This means that the Marine VHF distress channel, Ch16, is not regularly monitored and therefore shore authorities may not respond to a message sent on this channel.

Certain Marinas on the Ottawa River monitor VHF Channel 16 for their operating hours during the summer boating season, and police boats which also listen to marine band radio may be operating in your area.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE
1-888-310-1122

QUEBEC POLICE SERVICE
819-770-9111

Interview with Harry Blackmore, new President of SARVAC

The Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada (SARVAC) has named Harry Blackmore as its new President for a term of two years. Mr. Blackmore replaces Monica Ahlstrom, who served as President for seven years.

Mr. Blackmore is a retired professional fire captain who has been involved in search and rescue (SAR) for the past 35 years, has been involved with the Newfoundland and Labrador Ground Search and Rescue Association for 32 years and has been its President for the past 12. Mr. Blackmore was also the recipient of both a 1999 and 2004 Certificate of Achievement, presented by the National Search and Rescue Secretariat at its annual SARSCENE Workshop.

SARVAC is a national ground search and rescue (GSAR) volunteer association and has approximately 22,000 members.

During a recent visit to the National Search and Rescue Secretariat, Mr. Blackmore discussed his thoughts and goals for SARVAC.

The main issue is a reorganization of SARVAC so it becomes a strong national voice for GSAR volunteers across Canada. Mr. Blackmore says a national voice is necessary, especially for communicating national GSAR information to all the groups in the province.

"We want to work together so that all the information

comes from one voice and goes to all the organizations at the same time," he explained. "No one is missing out because everyone will get the same information," about policies, procedures, issues or trends affecting volunteers.

Along with reorganization, Mr. Blackmore would like to build stronger relations with partners such as police organizations across Canada, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, Canadian Coast Guard, Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, Civil Air Search and Rescue Association, Transport Canada, the National Search and Rescue Secretariat and others.

Further down the road, Mr. Blackmore would like to focus more on prevention programs and the creation of a national database with statistics on volunteer training and operations.

He's not sure he can accomplish all he has set out to do in these two years, but Mr. Blackmore is optimistic because "with 22,000 members, you can make a difference, no matter what you do." ■



After raising all the funds themselves, the members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Ground SAR Association built this command post, and within six months, it will be equipped with a complete GIS system. Pictured with the new command post is Harry Blackmore, President of NLGSARA.

Discarded ELT triggers search — a first-hand account

by Jack Onisimchuk

On April 20, 2004 Industry Canada was called to track down and deactivate an emergency locator transmitter (ELT). At 15:45, the Edmonton District Office of Industry Canada was contacted by the Joint Rescue Co-ordination Centre (JRCC), Trenton. The COSPAS-SARSAT satellite the JRCC monitors had detected a signal on the international emergency frequency of 121.5 MHz, and they were giving us the heads-up that our help might be required.

The JRCC quickly deployed a Hercules aircraft to sweep the area in an attempt to locate the source from the air. Nothing unusual was spotted, and it was decided that a ground search should be initiated. At 16:10 Industry Canada's assistance was formally requested. The responsibility to find and silence the beacon had now been handed to our department.

While not a routine occurrence, many of our Spectrum Management Officers have been called upon in the past by the JRCC for similar duties. Our staff is trained, equipped and experienced in tracking down radio signals.

Since the air search had not spotted a likely source (such as a downed aircraft) we felt we were dealing with an ELT that had been inadvertently activated. And while relieved to know that it was unlikely the result of a plane crash, we still had to act swiftly to find and deactivate the source. The possibility existed that the false alert could interfere with a genuine distress signal should an actual emergency occur in the same area.

With the approximate location of the beacon loaded into our vehicular mapping/GPS system, and with the aid of our direction-finding equipment, we began our ground search. Within a half kilometre of the geographical coordinates JRCC supplied to us, our direction finder locked onto a signal and began providing bearings towards its origin. By 17:30 we had arrived at the entrance to the property where we believed the signal originated.

Almost nine out of every 10 ELT distress signals prove to be falsely triggered.

In the past we have found ELTs in diverse locations from aircraft and aircraft hangars, to maintenance shops and private homes. However we now found ourselves at the entrance to a large landfill site. Presented with acres of refuse, we realized this investigation had the potential to become an extremely difficult and time consuming process.

With limited vehicular access, our Officer was soon on foot — switching to a handheld device for its portability. That allowed her to narrow down the signal to a large pile of garbage that had been hauled in that day. What followed

could best be described as a team effort between our department, and the on-site workers.

While we analysed our equipment readings and relayed the results to the workers, they began to sort through the rubble with their back-hoe.

By carefully moving aside the debris one bucket at a time, we were finally able to zero in on the culprit. It was a small discarded ELT that could easily fit in the palm of the hand. Once located, the unit was opened, the batteries disconnected, and the transmitter silenced. It was now 19:05, less than 3 hours since our vehicle began its patrol.

The unit, other than having a broken switch, was fully functional. As ELTs, by design, activate when jarred we speculated it may have been triggered by the heavy equipment used at the landfill site. However, the only thing we can be certain of is that it had not been properly disposed of. The ELT had been discarded still connected to its antenna and a live battery pack, and obviously quite capable of triggering a satellite-borne receiver while buried in trash.

While this exercise does highlight the effectiveness of the emergency beacon locator network that is currently in place, its use comes at a significant cost. Almost nine out of every 10 ELT distress signals prove to be falsely triggered and this has created a tremendous burden on the resources of all agencies involved. Yet with some due diligence on behalf of the users, most if not all of these false alarms could be eliminated.

Some common causes of inadvertent ELT operation are improper storage or disposal where, as occurred in this instance, the unit was not properly deactivated. On board aircraft we have seen units that have been tripped by a hard landing or even severe air turbulence. As well, inadequate equipment maintenance procedures could contribute to false activation. When in doubt regarding the use, storage, maintenance or disposal of ELTs, the manufacturer's recommendations should be followed.

It is our hope that the information presented in this article will help reduce the waste and potential safety issues that are associated with false distress signals. ■

Jack Onisimchuk is a Spectrum Management Officer with the Spectrum Management, Information Technologies and Telecommunications sector of Industry Canada, located in the Prairies and Northern Region — based out of Edmonton.



